

THE

December 2023 - February 2024

ELBOW

The Magazine of **Formby Methodist Church**

Hope
for all

From the Editor

2024 draws ever closer. Indeed, we have already had two taster events, prior to the actual year itself. Our 150 Quiz (see p14) taxed many brains but we had a good response and raised over £60. And the Christmas Tree Festival (see p9) was an outstanding success - so many people were willing to lend their trees and to help decorate and assemble them. So much so that, rather than dismantle them as originally planned, it was decided to retain them for an extra Sunday. A huge thank you to all concerned.

As another taster, I have featured the cover of my forthcoming book on 150 years of Methodism in Formby as a back page for this issue of the *'Elbow'*.

As 2024 - all too rapidly - approaches, we have produced a separate flyer with all the dates of the various events planned for the year, so I have not taken up space here in the *'Elbow'* to duplicate the information. My thanks to the 150 Team for all their help and support in planning these - and I'm sure we can count on everyone's support during the year. It is an achievement of which we can all be very proud.



The last few months have been pretty busy. The Shoebox Express Bazaar (see p19) was a huge success, thanks particularly to the hard work throughout the year of Andrew and Maureen. And of course we are now part of the Southport Circuit. It certainly has been strange to see the names of preachers that we don't recognise, but it has been good to get to know them - and also the members from the other Southport churches, whom we have met at Circuit services. The September one was held at Elbow Lane, and we were delighted that so many from the other churches attended - we certainly have been made to feel very welcome in our new 'home'.

And so it is that wonderful time of the year once again. I do hope you will enjoy reading this issue of the *'Elbow'*, including various Christmas related articles - and there is even an article on Japan! Please do attend as many of our Christmas services as you possibly can (see p11) - and remember, all services are for young and not so young alike.

As ever, my sincere thanks to all who have helped me in whatever way with the production of this magazine - and particularly Graham and Helen.

A Very Happy and Blessed Christmas and New Year to all at Elbow Lane.

**Copy deadline for the March - May *'Elbow'* will be
11 FEBRUARY**

SERVICES AT ELBOW LANE

3 Dec, 10.30	Toy Service	Rev Sheila Prest
10 Dec, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Ernie Grimshaw
10 Dec, 6.00	Circuit Service	Ainsdale
17 Dec, 8.30	Holy Communion	Rev Derek Bowker
17 Dec, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Sue Edwards
17 Dec, 6.30	Carol Service	Rev Sheila Prest
24 Dec, 10.30	Morning Service	Mrs Shirley Potts
24 Dec, 4.30	Nativity Service	Rev Derek Bowker
25 Dec, 10.30	Christmas Day Service	Rev Sheila Prest
31 Dec, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Derek Bowker
7 Jan, 10.30	Covenant Service & Holy Communion	Rev Sheila Prest
14 Jan, 10.30	Morning Service	Mrs Jean McKenna
21 Jan, 10.30	Morning Service	Mr Keith Trencher
21 Jan, 6.30	Evening Service	Rev Marie-Anne Kent
28 Jan, 8.30	Holy Communion	Rev Marie-Anne Kent
28 Jan, 10.30	Morning Service	Mr Nigel Mawdsley
4 Feb, 11.00	Circuit Service NB No Service at Elbow Lane	Leyland Road, Southport
11 Feb, 10.30	Holy Communion	Rev Derek Bowker
18 Feb, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Sonya Marshall
18 Feb, 6.30	Holy Communion	Rev Ian Hu
25 Feb, 8.30	Holy Communion	Rev Patrick Evans
25 Feb, 10.30	Morning Service	Rev Patrick Evans

Minister's Letter

Hi Everyone

In my previous life I was a P.E. teacher in a large comprehensive school in Liverpool and as such I was often getting letters from parents to excuse their children from taking part in lessons. You know the style, *"Please excuse Sarah from P.E. today as she has a cold"*. I remember one note vividly, *"Dear Miss, I cannot do P.E. today coz she has hurt her leg from dancin in her bedroom last nite. Signed My Mum."*!

I begin with a Biblical quote which may be familiar to you.

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should love one another" (John 13: 34)

What a more appropriate time to talk about "Love", than during the run up to Christmas when we Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus. I remember a particular athletics lesson when the girls were attempting a long distance run around the track and I felt confident that with their fitness levels and a little bit of coaching, determination and encouragement all would be able to achieve a respectable time. I set them off and as you would expect the faster runners set off at a good pace at the front with the slower ones taking up the rear. After a couple of laps I noticed one of the best runners slow down and run alongside one of the back markers offering encouragement and egging them on to the finish. This runner had sacrificed her own glory of possibly winning the race to help another with less ability to finish.

That is "Love in Action"; putting our love for another first and oneself second. Isn't that exactly what Christ did for us when he died on the cross, putting us first and Himself second because of His love for us?

I don't wish to Bible bash but the theme of Love is crucial to our beliefs and it's through simple everyday actions like that of our athlete that bring God's kingdom here on earth much closer. Can we honestly say with hand on heart that we love our neighbour more

than ourselves in the knowledge that our neighbour may be our enemy as well as our friend?

Action speaks louder than words and during this Advent; let us take on board the message of “Love” that came down and comes down at Christmas for us all and then carry that message through into the New Year by loving one another as Jesus loves us.

Have a good one
Love and Peace,
Sheila
Rev Sheila Prest

Statement for the Churches in the Districts forming into the North West England District

The Synods of each of the Districts forming the new North West England District, have agreed to nominate to the Conference that the Revd Dr James N Tebbutt be designated to be the Chair of the North West England District from 1 September 2024. This will be for an initial period of six years, subject to the annual stationing of the Conference. Dr Tebbutt currently serves as Chair of the Cumbria District and has been part of the regional review group guiding the process of merger.

This recommendation was agreed by each of the Synods on Saturday 4th November, meeting collectively, but voting separately by ballot, and resulting from the relevant processes under Standing Order 423A.

Please pray for all involved in this discernment, and those impacted by this nomination who will be further discerning God’s calling upon their lives and ministry in the coming weeks and months.

Issued on behalf of the Synods of Bolton & Rochdale, Cumbria, Lancashire, Liverpool, and Manchester and Stockport Districts.

(Prepared by Stephen Cooper, Convenor of the Chairs Nomination Committee on behalf of the Chairs of District)

O Come, All ye Faithful

Nobody knows who wrote this well-loved Christmas carol. It was originally a Latin Christmas hymn, 'Adeste Fidelis'. It seems to have first 'surfaced' in English due to a John Francis Wade, who lived in the 18th century, and who made his living copying manuscripts and music by hand. Wade was a Roman Catholic, and all services in the church at that time were conducted in Latin, so he knew the language well.

The story goes that c.1750 he slipped this hymn into a manuscript he was copying for the English Roman Catholic College in Lisbon, Portugal. In 1785, some 35 years later, it turned up in the Portuguese Chapel in London, where it became known as the 'Portuguese Hymn'.

From there, the hymn appears to have 'travelled' across to the Margaret Chapel in London's West End. The future Prime Minister, William Gladstone, greatly appreciated the services at this church. He said that the congregation were "the most devout and happy that I have ever seen."

The Minister at that time was Frederick Oakley, one of the leaders of the 19th century Oxford Movement, who was later to convert to Roman Catholicism. Oakley believed strongly in the power of religious symbols and fine music, and before he left the Margaret Chapel, he introduced this hymn to the congregation. Having started as 'Adeste Fidelis', and been for a while 'The Portuguese Hymn', this hymn soon became known – and loved worldwide – as 'O Come, All Ye Faithful'.

O Come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him, born the King of angels;

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ, the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest;

(from the Parish Pump)

Our Christmas Tree Festival

The 150 Team suggested that, as tasters for our celebrations next year, it would be good to have a Quiz (see p14); and also a mini Christmas Tree Festival in Church. It was then decided that this could be mounted in conjunction with the Christmas Fair, whereby visitors to the Fair would enter through the Church. It was also decided to appeal to Church members to loan their trees, and that the trees should be decorated by the various groups using the Church premises, who would be able to showcase what they do.



Members and the Church groups rose to the occasion, so that by the day of the Fair, the Church was adorned by a dozen Christmas Trees, complemented by a Prayer Station. The trees remained in Church for



the following day's service - and indeed for the following Sunday, Toy Sunday, as well. £40 was raised for Sefton Children's Trust.

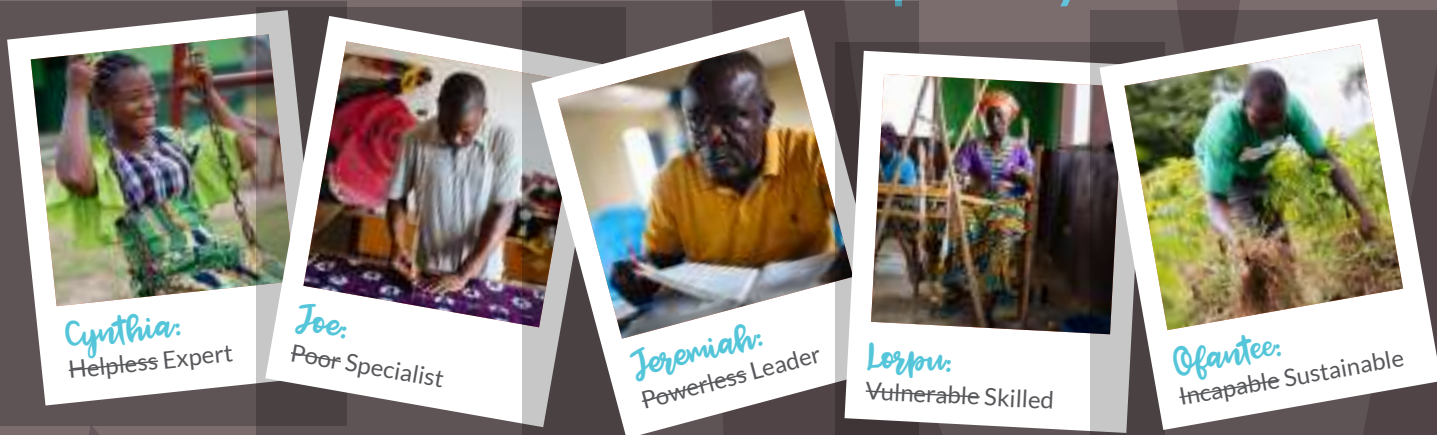
And so a huge thank you to all concerned, for making this new venture such a

huge success. I was particularly struck by the comment of one lady, who had always attended the annual tree Festival at St Peter's. "Yours", she said, "was every bit as good!" Same again next year?!

Alastair



We are doing all the we can
this January to help **All We Can** change
the **narrative around poverty**.



We chose our own fundraising challenge because we are the experts in our own lives. For the same reason, All We Can does not tell their local partners what to do because they know that **they** are the experts in **their** own lives! All We Can works through partnership alongside our global neighbours most impacted by disasters, poverty and injustice to enable flourishing and resilient communities around the world.

**Support us and help All We Can put local communities
in the driving seat of change.**

To give to our fundraising efforts,

allwecan.org.uk/allwecanuary

@allwecanuk

Images: All We Can's partners in Liberia work with people doing all sorts of activities to fulfil their potential. What activity could you do to fulfil yours during All We Canuary? ©Tom Price/All We Can

All We Can is the operating name of The Methodist Relief and Development Fund, a charity registered in England and Wales, number 291691

**ALL
WE
CAN**

'All We Can'

The aim of 'All We Can', previously the Methodist Relief and Development Fund, is to give people the means to help themselves improve their lives in some way. It might be by learning a skill or purchasing a bike to be able to travel safely what may be some distance to school.

This year the words of 'Longing for Light' (see p12) which is the basis of our Advent Liturgy are more apt than ever. The longing for Peace, food and water, and shelter are all mentioned and we think immediately of Israel and Ukraine but also nearer to home.

Money is tight for many and we all give to our preferred charities but maybe, as you sing these words you may feel moved to support one of the schemes. Have a look at their website and if you haven't finished or even started your gift buying you may find something there.

January is the month they choose to promote All the we Canuary campaign. You fill in the dots with something you could do to raise money. Running a marathon is an obvious suggestion but not one I'll be taking up! We could hold a coffee morning though. We all like a chat and cuppa. You may have other ideas. Please let us know.

Jane

Christmas at Elbow Lane

Sun 17 Dec, 6.30 Carol Service

Sun 24 Dec, 10.30 Christmas Eve Service

Sun 24 Dec, 4.30 Nativity Family Service

Mon 25 Dec, 10.30 Christmas Day Service

EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO ALL THESE SERVICES

'Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness'

(This was the hymn I chose to feature in the very first issue of the 'Elbow', way back in May 2018! While I am certainly not running out of hymns to write about - far from it - nevertheless, as this is the hymn which has been chosen to accompany our four Sunday morning Advent readings during December, I thought it would be appropriate to include at least an extract from that article.)

We sometimes regret that familiar and well-loved hymns do not appear in a new hymn book, and their replacements are not of the same standard. Yet some of the 'new' hymns are tremendously refreshing, opening a new spiritual perspective and giving new insights into God's relevance to the contemporary world.

This hymn is an excellent example of a modern hymn that is accessible, meaningful, singable - and indeed playable! I will always remember the first time I played it. It was at a packed Ordination Service, where the Minister (the Moderator, no less!) had chosen it and, as I not only did not have the music for it but had never even heard it, he had assured me that someone would get it to me before the service; it arrived with minutes to spare! Since then, however, I have played it many times, and it is now one of my favourites - and indeed of the congregation at Elbow Lane, where we have sung it many times in recent years.

The hymn was written by Bernadette Farrell, a Catholic hymn writer and composer from West Yorkshire. She studied at King's College, London and the Guildhall School of Music. Her first commission was actually from Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral in 1980. Since then, she has worked for many years in London's East End.

In her compositions, she has drawn inspiration from the English choral and folk song traditions. She was recently interviewed on 'Songs of Praise', in which she spoke about music as the language of faith, of the Kingdom of God inside us, and her concern about

poverty, hunger, equal chance - and war. Her writings are part of her response to the scriptures, particularly the Psalms, and the need for us all to use the gifts God has given us. Her own very special gift is to be able to compose richly meaningful, often challenging lyrics and comforting, prayerful melodies.

'Longing for Light' - one of several of hers in *'Singing the Faith'* - is probably her best known. It speaks of the longing of the human spirit, the longing for change to make life tolerable for everyone. It mentions the longing for light, truth, peace, hope, food, water, shelter and warmth.

There is a challenge in each of the first four verses, in which she prays that Christ will make us:

*"your own, your holy people
Your living voice
Your bread broken for others
Your building, sheltering others."*

Then in the final verse, the challenge to all of us is made absolutely clear:

"let us be servants to one another, making your kingdom come."

And in between each verse is a great refrain which is both a prayer and an acclamation:

*"Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today."*

The music perfectly reflects the various sentiments and moods of the text - gentle and reflective for the five verses, then, in contrast, firm and exhilarating as each refrain begins, *"Christ be our light!"*

Alastair



150th Anniversary, 2024

Already, we have had two tasters for our celebrations next year. Our Christmas Tree Festival was a great success (see p9), while the 150 Quiz caused a lot of head scratching, to say the least!

Many of the questions had a 150 theme, relating either to 1874 or the number 150. It was far from easy - indeed, on reflection, perhaps it should have been just a little less difficult!

Nevertheless, we had a good response, and some splendid entries - the winning entry scored a splendid 140 out of 150, while three other entries scored over 130. Our winners were Maureen & Trevor, and Sheila presented them with a prize at the Toy Service on 3 December. The results have now been posted in the Church hall - and remember, the judges' decision is final!!

And perhaps most important of all, over £60 will have been made towards Church funds.

And so on to 2024! A flyer has now been produced listing all the events planned for throughout the year. Do pick one up if you haven't already done so.

Finally, my book on the story of Methodism in Formby is well underway, and hopefully will be available around the end of January. As yet another taster, I have put the front cover of the book on the back page of this magazine. It will sell @ only £10, available from Derbyshires or myself - perhaps a belated Christmas present?!

Alastair

No Room? On the Contrary!

This year one carol will be sung with particular poignancy. It retells the message of angels, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests” and continues:

“Yet with the woes of sin and strife,
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel strain have rolled,
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love song which they bring:
O hush the noise, you men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.”

The angels’ goodwill message will persist despite our clamour, for it proclaims God’s all-embracing and eternal welcome. Heaven’s doors are ever open: it is home for everyone. The final biblical vision is of an all-encompassing city: “On no day will its gates ever be shut... the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it.”

Jesus, for whom there had been no room at the inn, taught that God’s kingdom is home for every race: “I say to you that many will come from the East and the West, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” He reassured those anxious about the future: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms...”

No room? Don’t you believe it!

(from the Parish Pump)

“No God – No Peace. Know God – Know Peace”

The Most Beautiful Story Ever Told

A well-known atheist was once interviewed on Radio 4. When asked how he spent Christmas, he said that he went to Midnight Mass at church. *"But you're an atheist",* his interviewer protested. *"Yes",* he replied, *"but what they celebrate at Christmas is the most beautiful story ever told".*

That 'beautiful story' tells of a Creator who sent His Son to share the life of His creation, to be born as a helpless baby, to grow up as a man of extraordinary wisdom, gentleness and love, who was executed by the authorities for contradicting the traditions of the time. His followers – who today number about two billion people all over the world – believe that He rose from the dead, and that by His death and resurrection He has made possible forgiveness and eternal life for men and women everywhere.

That is certainly quite a story, perhaps the greatest story ever told, and yes, beautiful. And that is the story that will be rehearsed again this Christmas, in children's Nativities, in hymns and carols, in Bible readings and sermons all over the country. People who stay away from church all year turn up to hear it, and who can blame them? This is a story of hope, of love and of heaven touching earth.



Most of us are familiar with probably the best-known statue in the world, Christ the Redeemer, towering over Rio de Janeiro, His arms outstretched in blessing. Christmas celebrates the birth of that great Redeemer – a tiny baby laid in a feeding trough. His birth changed history, His life transformed our understanding of what it means to be human, His death was at one and the same time a tragedy and a triumph. Yes,

'the most beautiful story ever told'. Enjoy it again this Christmas.
(from the Parish Pump)

THE LADIES FELLOWSHIP

Our Ladies Meeting which is held every Thursday at 2.00pm in the Maple Leaf Room continues to blossom. We are experiencing a very good attendance each week and our Members enjoy not only interesting informative guest speakers but also sharing in games or challenge each other with quizzes. We continue to donate to various charities and support the Ukraine Welcome Centre in Blundellsands.

Our time of worship and prayer is important to us, as we remember a hurting world, and all known to us who need our support and love.

We welcome anyone who would like to join us for an afternoon of friendship, refreshment and much laughter and chat.

Our Programme for December 2023 – March 2024

14 Dec	Christmas Celebration
4 Jan	Rev Derek Bowker
11 Jan	Rev Ernie and Mrs Nicky Grimshaw
18 Jan	Alan Williams – <i>‘Climbing in the Andes’</i>
25 Jan	Rev Ian Hu
1 Feb	Maggie and Mandy Entertain
8 Feb	Keith Trencher – <i>‘A Heart Still Beating’</i>
15 Feb	Poetry Afternoon
22 Feb	Rev Marie-Anne Kent
29 Feb	Keyboard Café Concert
7 Mar	Shirley Potts – <i>‘School Worker Trust’</i>
14 Mar	Ruth Bloom – <i>‘Musical Chair Exercises’</i>
21 Mar	Visit to Lady Green Garden Centre
28 Mar	Rev Sheila Prest – Maundy Thursday

We look forward to seeing you all at our December meetings and wish you a Blessed Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Irene (876219)

THEIR WORST WINTER YET!

FOOD BANKS ACROSS THE UK MAY BE FACING THEIR WORST WINTER YET

THE INDEPENDENT FOOD AID NETWORK (IFAN) HAS WARNED THAT THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE NEEDING FOODBANKS THIS YEAR ARE STILL RISING, AS THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS CONTINUES.

THE TRUSSELL TRUST, WHICH RUNS THE UK'S LARGEST NETWORK OF FOOD BANKS, EXPECTS TO SUPPORT MORE THAN 600,000 PEOPLE BETWEEN DECEMBER AND FEBRUARY. THIS MEANS HANDING OUT AROUND ONE MILLION FOOD PARCELS, OR AN AVERAGE OF ONE PARCEL EVERY EIGHT SECONDS, WHICH IS 11,500 PARCELS A DAY, MAKING IT THE "WORST WINTER YET" FOR THE CHARITY.

THESE FIGURES SUPPORT WHAT WORKERS AT CITIZENS ADVICE HAVE FOUND, THAT THERE IS A "TERRIFYING NEW NORMAL OF PEOPLE LIVING ON EMPTY."

TO COMPOUND THE PROBLEM, MANY INDEPENDENT FOOD BANKS ARE NOW RUNNING LOW ON DONATIONS. AS THE MANAGER OF ONE SUCH FOODBANK RECENTLY TOLD THE IFAN, "SURPLUS FOOD IS DOWN. OUR COLLECTIONS ARE UNDER 50% OF WHAT THEY WERE. IT JUST DOESN'T WORK." PAUL O'BRIEN OF SOCIAL JUSTICE CHARITY MICAH LIVERPOOL PUT IT THIS WAY: "FOOD BANKS CANNOT SUSTAIN THIS LEVEL OF POVERTY FOR MUCH LONGER."

SU PARRISH, BASED AT THE EASTER TEAM IN CRAWLEY, EXPLAINS A FURTHER PROBLEM FOR THE FOODBANKS: "EVERYONE IS FEELING THE STRAIN OF STRUGGLING TO SUPPORT CLIENTS WITH INCREASINGLY COMPLEX NEEDS. MOST OF OUR VOLUNTEERS SIGNED UP TO GIVE OUT FOOD PARCELS AND BE A FRIENDLY FACE SPREADING SOME LOVE. THEY DIDN'T ANTICIPATE THE LEVEL OF STRESS THAT OUR CLIENTS NOW EXHIBIT BECAUSE OF THE SITUATIONS THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN."

(FROM THE PARISH PUMP)



As we approach the end of the year, we look back at the Shoebbox Express Bazaar and look forward to the Christmas shoeboxes being delivered to children in Ukraine facing challenging circumstances in their lives.

Did you visit the Shoebbox Express Bazaar on 14th October? It seemed everyone, old and young, from Church was there. Manning the stalls, greeting our visitors, working in the kitchen or buffet car or just filling a shoebox with useful things for a child in need in Ukraine. On paper, Shoebbox Express is an independent, secular charity. But nobody, especially the Trustees, believes Shoebbox Express would exist were it not for the people of Formby Methodist Church and their commitment of time and money and the donation of their buildings for the big day. The Shoebbox Express Trustees would like to say a big 'thank you' to everyone at Formby Methodist Church.

A total of 556 Christmas shoeboxes were made that Saturday - a new record for the Formby Methodist Church Bazaar. There was also a new record for the kitchen - over 200 bacon baps were served by the hard-working catering team. So far this year, 1100 Christmas shoeboxes have been made for children in Ukraine and the total by the end of the year will likely be over 1200.

A lot of people from the Formby community attended the bazaar for the first time and some said this would be the start of an annual tradition for their family. So, Formby Methodist Church, what do you say? Same place, same time, next year?

God bless you all. Thomas, Maureen and Andrew



R°N

Sara preferred to let people work
out the hymns for themselves



Mouse Makes



GOD'S PROMISE

Isaiah 9:6-7

CHILD • BORN • SON
GIVEN • WONDERFUL
COUNCELLOR
MIGHTY • GOD
EVERLASTING
FATHER • PRINCE
PEACE • LORD



AN ANGEL MESSENGER

Luke 1:26-38

ANGEL • GABRIEL
JOSEPH • MARY
FAVOUR • SON
JESUS • GREAT
THRONE • REIGN
FOREVER • HOLY
SERVANT • WORD

ADVENT
comes from
the Latin
'AD VENTO'
which means
ARRIVAL

In Advent we
celebrate Jesus' birth
and look forward to
the time when Jesus
will come again.



A LONG JOURNEY

Luke 2:1-20

BETHLEHEM
REGISTER • BIRTH
MANGER • INN
SHEPHERDS • FLOCK
ANGELS • JOY
GOOD NEWS • PRAISE
SAVIOUR • CHRIST



THE BEST GIFT OF ALL

John 3:16

GOD • SO • LOVED
WORLD • HE • GAVE
ONLY • SON
WHOEVER • BELIEVES
ETERNAL • LIFE

V	R	P	R	I	N	C	E	L	R	O	D
W	O	R	D	C	F	A	T	H	E	R	E
J	A	G	M	A	N	G	E	R	G	E	B
O	W	H	O	E	V	E	R	W	I	I	J
S	J	O	Y	B	O	R	N	O	S	G	E
E	S	L	S	E	R	V	A	N	T	N	S
P	P	Y	J	C	H	I	L	D	E	P	U
H	R	O	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S
F	A	V	O	U	R	E	F	R	W	S	O
B	I	R	T	H	S	W	O	F	O	D	L
I	S	A	V	I	O	U	R	U	R	L	O
F	E	C	O	U	N	C	E	L	L	O	R
A	N	G	E	L	B	J	V	K	D	V	D
B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M	G	E	S
L	A	N	G	E	L	S	R	G	O	D	V
I	G	A	B	R	I	E	L	T	D	S	M
F	P	G	I	V	E	N	A	H	U	O	A
E	E	H	G	A	V	E	S	R	W	N	R
S	A	E	G	R	E	A	T	O	N	L	Y
O	C	H	R	I	S	T	I	N	N	J	O
N	E	O	G	O	O	D	N	E	W	S	N
F	L	O	C	K	M	I	G	H	T	Y	B

The Story of the Christmas Card

The history of Christmas cards is closely connected with the beginnings of the Post Office and the railways.

Of course, very early 'Christmas cards' had been around for hundreds of years, in the form of a simple exchange of Christmas greetings in private letters. The earliest such letter on record was written in England in 1534.

In 1611 a huge Christmas card made what proved to be a short-lived appearance. It measured a massive 33" by 24", and was presented to King James I. It featured an illustration of a rose, four poems, a song, and a Christmas message for the king and his son.



Then in 1843 came the creation of Christmas cards as we know them today. One enterprising man was particularly responsible for this: Sir Henry Cole, a senior civil servant who had helped launch the Post Office, as an Assistant to Rowland Hill. Previously, only rich people could afford the Post, but with the building of the railways, which carried far more packages than a horse and cart (and went much faster), suddenly the Penny Post became possible.

To encourage 'ordinary' people to use the new service, Sir Henry came up with the bright idea of a creating a simple card that people could send each other for Christmas. His friend, J o h n Horsley, was an artist, who designed a three-panel card. Two panels depicted people caring for the poor, and the



middle panel showed a family enjoying a large Christmas dinner.

At first, about 1000 cards were printed, and advertised under the slogan: *'Just published, a Christmas Congratulations Card; or picture emblematical of old English festivity to perpetuate kind recollections between dear friends!'* The cards sold for one shilling each and could be posted to friends and family for a penny. There was an immediate, warm response from the public and, as printing methods improved, Christmas cards were soon being produced in large quantities. By 1870 the cost of posting one had even dropped to just half a penny, meaning that more and more cards had to be printed to meet the increased demand.

The early cards often depicted a Nativity scene, but towards the end of the 19th century, robins - postmen in those days were nick-named 'Robin Postmen', because of their red uniforms - and snow-scenes became increasingly popular.

Christmas cards appeared in the USA in the late 1840's. They were mass produced from 1875, and in 1915 John C Hall and his brothers created Hallmark Cards, which of course are still produced today - indeed, the firm now offers 2,000 different designs of Christmas card alone.

Charity Christmas cards have a longer history than might be expected - they began in Denmark in the early 1900's. They soon spread to Sweden and Norway, and then on throughout Europe and America.

Last year the Royal Mail estimated that, despite a strike, it had delivered 150 million cards during the Christmas period. That figure would have been even higher were it not for the increasing popularity of e-cards and the tendency of the younger generation not to send Christmas cards.

Sir Henry Cole, who had begun it all, went on to play a key role in the foundation of the public Record Office and the Victoria & Albert Museum; he was also a leading light in the Great Exhibition. He even found time to write, under the pseudonym of Felix Summerly, a number of children's books. He died in 1882.



Alastair

Big Ben

Do you stay up until midnight on New Year's Eve? If so, this year will be special – 100 years ago, on 31st December 1923, the BBC first broadcast the chimes of Big Ben to welcome in the New Year. For it was not until 31st December 1923 that the chimes of Big Ben were ever heard outside of Parliament and Westminster. But then the BBC got permission to broadcast them to the nation, and history was made.

That first year, the BBC engineers were not allowed into Parliament, and so had to access Big Ben from the roof of the Palace of Westminster. This meant that their microphone picked up not just the chimes, but a lot of traffic noise as well. But a tradition had started, and by 1924 the Big Ben bongs were being broadcast every day. By then the BBC had installed low sensitivity microphones very close to the bells, so that they missed the sound of the clock mechanism.



The nation quickly came to love the sound of Big Ben, and during the Second World War the chimes were broadcast across occupied Europe – encouraging millions in their struggle against the Nazis. The Big Ben daily time signal on the BBC is still cherished today, and Big Ben rings live for important events such as Remembrance Day and New Year, when the sound is sent right around the world.

See also www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/anniversaries/december/big-ben-new-year
(from the Parish Pump)

Church Email Address & Distribution List

The Stewards can be contacted by email via formbymethodist@yahoo.com

We also have an email distribution list for Formby specific communications which the Stewards use from time to time - if you would like to be added to this, please email the above address, indicating that you wish to be included on the email distribution list. Thanks.

Tim (Senior Steward)



We send Christmas cards to people for so many different reasons: because they are special friends, or we hardly ever see them but like to keep in touch each year – sharing a bit of news in our card. Sending

traditional cards may be important to us and to those who receive them. Nowadays, however, there are alternatives for people who are 'tech-savvy', such as ecards and sending Christmas letters via email. It's a matter of individual choice. Some people don't buy cards and give the money that they save to charity. Last year, I was ill, so I sent fewer cards than normal. In the New Year I phoned people to whom I would normally have sent a card and enjoyed several 'catch-up' conversations I might not have had!

Some of you may want the option of sending a single Christmas card, with greetings, to all your friends at church. If you are unsure how to add a card to the current display in the church porch, please ask me, Jane Gillies or Irene Watts. Many heartfelt and special greetings are written in these cards, so please read them.

Some Christmas Eco Facts and Tips

The card used in the UK at Christmas would stretch between London and Lapland (and back again) 103 times!

On average, each UK household throws away three-and-a-half black bags full of Christmas packaging.

The UK discards 54 million platefuls of food over Christmas.

Gift wrap and cards that contain foil, plastic or glitter are not recyclable (wrap that contains plastic unfolds when scrunched). More 'eco-friendly' options are products made from paper or card that is recycled or has FSC approval. FSC certification ensures that products come from responsibly managed forests.

A gift bag can be reused several times, reducing the amount of paper and sticky tape used and saving the problem of wrapping-up presents with awkward angles!

Many charities sell gift cards or ecards that support their work and can be sent as presents to those family members or friends who say 'they don't want anything' but still, in your eyes, deserve a present.

LED Christmas lights can use 75% less energy than traditional ones. Turning them off overnight or when you're out also saves energy.

Leftover food from Christmas can often be turned into another tasty meal or frozen. Homemade pizzas with leftovers used as toppings are always popular in our house.

At Christmas, when unwrapping larger presents, you can save the wrapping paper and any ribbons or bows for reuse. Christmas cards can be cut up and used as gift tags for next year.

Items that have been replaced by Christmas gifts can be donated to charity or, if beyond repair, many can be recycled at our local tip.

Dates for your Diary

Mon 8 Jan - Eco Group Meeting, 12-2 pm in the Circle Room. Bring your own lunch and we'll supply drinks. All are welcome!

Sat 27 Jan - Fundraising Coffee Morning, 10-12 in the Church hall.

26 - 28 Jan - The Big Garden Birdwatch is an opportunity take time to notice the birds in your garden or nearest green space. This is organised by RSPB. We will give more information nearer the time.

Finally, and by no means least, I want to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year. Thank you.

Jenny Wallbanks

Loyalty

In Edinburgh stands Greyfriars Graveyard. In 1858 a faithful dog called Bobby followed the remains of his beloved master to this cemetery. Here the dog stayed on or near the graveside until his death, 14 years later.

This is a story about loyalty. More poignantly, many people have devoted themselves to others through all kinds of circumstances. It's amazing what some people have gone through in giving their lives to someone to ensure their comfort, safety, and well-being.

There are numerous examples of loyalty in the Bible. The widow Ruth refused to return home to Moab to be with her people. Instead, she committed herself to staying with her mother-in-law, Naomi, whatever happened. The young David, many years before he became king, and Jonathan, the son of King Saul, promised to look out for each other no matter what ill befell them. Moses was faithfully loyal to God. They spoke with each other as if they were friends! He served God endlessly despite the frustrations of leading a vast crowd through the desert for 40 years.

What about us? How loyal are we to God? A difficult question, when so much can sway our eyes, our minds, emotions and behaviour in a world that thinks it doesn't need a faithful and loving God to care for them! It's easy to be loyal when times are good, but a different thing when hardships surround us.

Do we ever feel uncomfortable singing hymns about courage, obedience and service? Some provoke a challenge. Do we *really* mean all the words we sing? Consider the hymn '*O Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end*'. It is a stirring declaration of faith, with prayer requests that we be steadfast in all circumstances. While it is good to sing hymns about loyalty, we should also try to work out what our commitment to God really entails.

Jesus made some testing statements about loyalty, and warned His hearers about weighing up the pros and cons before following Him. Jesus said 'Take up your cross'. This challenging phrase is the ultimate test of our devotion and dedication to Him.

Loyalty in all relationships is a joy to behold, but no loyalty is greater than our loyalty to the Lord. Fortunately, God knows our weaknesses and will always pick us up when we stumble and will forgive us when we fail. After all, Jesus is 100% loyal to us and promised "*I will never leave you and never forsake you.*" Amen to that!

(from the Parish Pump)

HIDDEN TREASURES

‘I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the Lord, who call you by your name.’ Isaiah 45:3.

The words of Isaiah were spoken to people experiencing huge disruption, conflict and challenge. Likewise, God is with us in our challenging times. Even in the midst of uncertainty, we hear stories about how people have encountered God at work in unexpected places, and amongst unexpected people. Finding these hidden treasures in our churches and communities can help us to rediscover a sense of hope about what lies ahead and find a renewed calling to see where God is at work. To continue to follow God in these uncertain times means having the courage to recognise that the Church we are called to become may look different to what we are used to. Yet, even as new church communities and gatherings are forming in exciting and different ways, they carry with them some of our ‘Methodist DNA’ – the treasures of our distinctive Methodist tradition and heritage.

*(the President and Vice-President of the British Methodist Conference,
in the Methodist Prayer Handbook 2023/2024 - ‘Hidden Treasures’)*

On Saturday 11th November, Liz and I had the privilege of joining St. Peter’s Church for ***‘A Quiet Time with God – Reflecting on Hidden Treasures’***. This was beautifully led by **Rev Jane Morgan** who asked the question: *What hidden treasures has God given you in – **creation, people, places, experiences, yourself?*** Notice what awakens in your heart as you read these words.

*I am a multifaceted treasure,
There were many things concealed in me
that different people drew out and revealed to me.
I gratefully remember the persons who uncovered them.
Finally I stand before the Lord and find, to my surprise,
that He considers me a Treasure
And I rest in the love He gives me.
(Antony de Mello)*

Irene Watts

The Heart of Christmas

We're at that time of year again! But is Christmas just about the shopping, tree or presents? At its heart, Christmas is all about a God who has showed up on earth. The Creator of the universe, whose hands flung stars into space, cared enough to come to earth as a tiny baby. *"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us."*

Every year we sing carols and retell the same story of the donkey, innkeeper, stable, angels, shepherds, star, wise men, gifts and Mary and Joseph with baby! Why do we do all this? It's to remind us that God deals with the mess of our world by sending His Son to die in our place. This makes it possible for us to have a relationship with Himself:

When the time came, He *"did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death - even death on a cross!"*

Reflecting on Jesus in the manger is a great place to start understanding the heart of the Christmas message. However, it's so much more than simply a cute baby lying in the bed of straw:

*If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us
an educator;*

*If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us
a scientist;*

*If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us
an economist;*

*If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us
an entertainer;*

*But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us
a Saviour.*

(from the Parish Pump)

So how well do you know the Christmas story? Try these 20 questions - and they are a lot easier than the 150 Quiz!! Answers on p39. Ed.

Nativity Quiz

1. Where did Mary and Joseph live before Jesus was born?
a) Nazareth b) Bethlehem c) Jerusalem
2. What was the name of the angel who told Mary she would have a child?
3. What did Joseph do for a living?
4. Who was the Roman ruler when Jesus was born?
5. Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?
6. How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?
7. Why couldn't Mary and Joseph find a place to stay?
8. Where does the Bible say Jesus was born?
a) in a stable b) in hay c) in a manger
9. According to the Bible, which animals were present in the stable when Jesus was born? a) sheep and a donkey b) cattle and a donkey c) donkey, sheep and cattle d) none
10. What does the angel say to the shepherds when they tell them to go to Bethlehem?
11. The wise men travelled to Jerusalem. a) northward b) southward c) eastward d) westward
12. What did the Wise Men follow to find Jesus?
13. How many Wise Men visited baby Jesus?
14. What gifts did the wise men bring for Jesus?
15. Who spread the news about baby Jesus throughout Bethlehem?
16. What is the City of David also known as in the Bible?
17. Which of the gospels tell the story of the Nativity?
18. What does Jesus' other name, "Immanuel", mean? a) God with us b) Son of God c) He who is God d) Chosen One
19. How many days after the birth of Christ did Joseph and Mary give him the name Jesus?
20. Jesus was born on the 25th of December. True or false?

Not Lost in Translation

Last month I was fortunate in my new(ish) role at the University of Liverpool, Management School to visit Tokyo to attend an event to help recruit MBA candidates to the university. After months of planning my flight left from Manchester to Hong Kong and then onto Tokyo.

This was my first visit to Japan, having been on my wish list of places to visit for sometime. A friend lived in Japan for 10 years and had a wonderful time whilst living there so I was eager to see it for myself.



What things spring to mind when you think of Tokyo? For me it's words like clean, ultra organised, karaoke, modern and traditional culture, innovative, organised, orderly, polite people and super fast, reliable trains. And Tokyo doesn't disappoint, it's all of those things and more!

Tokyo is vast, being made up of 23 districts. I was staying in Shinjuku, famous for its clubs, karaoke clubs and vibrant nightlife. My first evening out was an explosion of lights, neon signs, music, hoards of people - almost too much for the brain to take in!! Even a giant virtual cat placed on top of a building ready to jump into the crowd below. Police women dressed in smart uniforms carrying a Hello Kitty bag. People in Tokyo work hard but they also know how to party hard too.



A day off was spent sightseeing and my first journey on the city's super trains. Fabulously logical (red line, blue line etc) , easy to navigate (signs in English are a big help obviously), spotlessly clean, super safe and

cheap. And each time you arrive at a new station when you get off the train you are treated to a little tune that plays over the tannoy - a different tune for each station.

I headed for Asakusa and Sensoji, the popular Buddhist temple completed in 645 which is Tokyo's oldest temple. Richly colourful and the air laden with the smell of incense, it's a place of worship and where locals and tourists mingle, with women and girls dressed in the traditional kimonos. The district is also home to shops, markets, restaurants and tea houses.



Any visit to Tokyo isn't complete without a trip to the world's busiest pedestrian crossing, the Shibuya 'scramble' crossing. But before I even



reached the crossing, I first needed to navigate my way out of the Shibuya station. Much of Tokyo is underground, stations, shops and restaurants so if you don't know where you're going it can take a while to get out of the station! I joined an estimated

crowd of between 1,000 -2,500 people who cross every two minutes. And no one ever tries to cross until the green man says you can go!

Finally, I couldn't finish my article without a mention of the Japanese hi-tech toilets that you find everywhere - a totally unique experience. Electronic, warmed seats, spotlessly clean and lots of buttons to press including a built in bidet. My brief visit to Tokyo has only whetted my appetite to visit again and see more of this fascinating country.

Sarah Jones

Methodist World Mission / Mission In Britain Funds

Very many thanks to the generous givers to the above funds, and once again I am happy to report that the total amount to pass on was nearly £1200 - £687-98 by Mission boxes and £500 by the Church through our normal weekly giving. All this against a background where so many of our congregation are also involved in monetary giving to various other organisations and charities and other worthy causes. Details are as below.

World Mission Fund

6 months to March 2023	£189-19
6months to Oct 2023	£204-06
Annual contribution from Church funds	£250-00
Total for year	£643-25

Mission In Britain Fund

6 months to March 2023	£146-70
6months to Oct 2023	£148-03
Annual contribution from Church funds	£250-00
Total for year	£544-73

Our total contributions since 2014 (with one year out through Covid) are a very impressive £8528-03 which averages out at £1066 per year. It is so good to know that the thoughts and actions of our Church family clearly care for people sometimes living far away from us - a record that we should all be proud of?

Thank you once again on behalf of so many people in need. I am always looking for new contributors to replace givers who sadly cannot continue or are no longer with us. Just see myself or ask any Steward who will be glad to give you a savings box. Every little helps!

Another terrific year financially for Mission giving at our Church. Thank you so much.

Brian Ashworth

FATHER'S LOVE LETTER

An intimate message from God to you.

My Child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. Psalm 139:1 I know when you sit down and when you rise up. Psalm 139:2 I am familiar with all your ways. Psalm 139:3 Even the very hairs on your head are numbered. Matthew 10:29-31 For you were made in my image. Genesis 1:27 In me you live and move and have your being. Acts 17:28 For you are my offspring. Acts 17:28 I knew you even before you were conceived. Jeremiah 1:4-5 I chose you when I planned creation. Ephesians 1:11-12 You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book. Psalm 139:15-16 I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live. Acts 17:26 You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Psalm 139:14 I knit you together in your mother's womb. Psalm 139:13 And brought you forth on the day you were born. Psalm 71:6 I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me. John 8:41-44 I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love. 1 John 4:16 And it is my desire to lavish my love on you. 1 John 3:1 Simply because you are my child and I am your Father. 1 John 3:1 I offer you more than your earthly father ever could. Matthew 7:11 For I am the perfect father. Matthew 5:48 Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand. James 1:17 For I am your provider and I meet all your needs. Matthew 6:31-33 My plan for your future has always been filled with hope. Jeremiah 29:11 Because I love you with an everlasting love. Jeremiah 31:3 My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore. Psalm 139:17-18 And I rejoice over you with singing. Zephaniah 3:17 I will never stop doing good to you. Jeremiah 32:40 For you are my treasured possession. Exodus 19:5 I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul. Jeremiah 32:41 And I want to show you great and marvelous things. Jeremiah 33:3 If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me. Deuteronomy 4:29 Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4 For it is I who gave you those desires. Philippians 2:13 I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine. Ephesians 3:20 For I am your greatest encourager. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you. Psalm 34:18 As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart. Isaiah 40:11 One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Revelation 21:3-4 And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth. Revelation 21:3-4 I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus. John 17:23 For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed. John 17:26 He is the exact representation of my being. Hebrews 1:3 He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you. Romans 8:31 And to tell you that I am not counting your sins. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you. 1 John 4:10 I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love. Romans 8:31-32 If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me. 1 John 2:23 And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. Romans 8:38-39 Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen. Luke 15:7 I have always been Father, and will always be Father. Ephesians 3:14-15

My question is... Will you be my child? John 1:12-13

I am waiting for you. Luke 15:11-32

*Love, Your Dad
Almighty God*



Bats in the Belfry!

You might recall that there was a very welcome spell of surprisingly hot weather in early September. Maureen and I were fortunate enough to be on a short break in Rutland, near Oakham at the time. On the last day, we were moving on to visit our son in Leicester. We were due to arrive around 6pm, by which time Alan and his fiancée Julie would be home from work. This gave us the chance to explore a little more of the delightful countryside.

As the weather was so benign, we decided to do a short walk, starting in the nearby village of Braunston - in Rutland (population c.500). The starting point was from the Church of All Saints, where we took advantage of the shelter provided by the entrance porch to escape the heat (a novelty for September!) While eating our sandwiches, we looked at the Church notice board. Lots of rotas, as you would expect, but these included Bell Ringing practices, door opening duties for weekdays and details of the Sunday services for the seven associated churches covered by the Vicar. The 'door-opening lady' duly arrived and encouraged us to go inside.

Only time for a quick look, but sufficient to learn that the Church dated back to the 12th century, that it was the largest in England's smallest county and that they had some property problems in recent times. Two display boards reported that the stairs to the Bell Tower were unsafe and, along with other less urgent issues, around £500,000 was needed to fully cover the current programme. But the second board conveyed the good news that the problems with bats in the rafters had finally been resolved after nearly ten years of trying.

We thought no more about it and carried on with our walk. However, a week later, I spotted an article in the 'Daily Telegraph' nature notes column, entitled "Church salvation from bats in roof", setting out the full story of the saga of the Braunston bats. Apparently, in 2013 a

chimney near the church had collapsed. The resident bat colony then transferred en bloc to the church and set up residence in the rafters. In time, the mess and smell from their droppings became so appalling that it was feared that the Church might have to close. Happily, a solution has eventually been found, through the auspices of a pilot scheme for Bats in Churches. After a five year plan of action, the outcome is that by blocking holes in the ceiling, the bats still live in the roof but the droppings are no longer invading the church. The local congregation are celebrating the good news. Sounds like a victory for both sides!

It reminded me of the seemingly endless problems we encountered during the refurbishment programme in 2008, but at least we were dealing with issues over which we had at least some control. I'm not sure if we could have coped with an uninvited visitation of bats!

Trevor Simpson

FLOWER ROTA

3 Dec	Joy Thomson	Barbara
10 Dec	Jean Horne	Vicky
7 Jan	Irene Watts	Vicky
14 Jan	Ivy Chapple	Vicky
21 Jan	Bob & Vicky Jenions	Margaret
28 Jan	Margaret Carleton	Margaret
4 Feb	Bill Roberts	Barbara
11 Feb	Maureen & Andrew May	Barbara
18 Feb	J Kemp, Phil & Eileen Morgan	Vicky
25 Feb	Steve & Lynda Gee	Vicky

Please put your donation in the envelope provided and give it to the flower arranger as liste above. Thank you.

Vicky (873317)

Looking Back on the 2023 Cricket Season

The 2023 cricket season ended on a jarring note. A widespread review of the game in England found it suffered from racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination.

Older cricket fans will wince. They recall the days when each county side was divided into amateurs and professionals, called Gentlemen and Players. They had separate changing rooms. Gentlemen came from wealthy families, so didn't need the wages paid to the others. You could distinguish them on cricket scorecards, where Gentlemen's names were printed with their initials in front of their surnames, whereas Players' names were the other way round. The team captain was always an amateur.

For centuries, women have played cricket, using a smaller ball, but it wasn't until 1976 that they were allowed to play at Lords, where schoolboys from Eton and Harrow had played for years. Twenty five years later, Ebony Rainford-Brent became the first black woman to play for her country, and was subject to racist abuse. *"As soon as I walked into the world of cricket the comments started"*, she said.

In the early days, a few Indian cricketers from noble families played for English counties and even for the national team. But by and large the game in England was played by white people. Class distinction was accepted without question. In church, they still sang,

*"The rich man in his castle, The poor man at his gate;
God made them, high or lowly, And ordered their estate."*

Although the Bible acknowledges distinctions between rich and poor, employers and workers, kings and their subjects, it gives priority to the poor and powerless, and places grave responsibility on those who are wealthy and wield power. No reference is made to their skin colour. Adam and Eve are presented as non-ethnic and non-national because they represent all people of all ethnicities.

One outstanding cricketer, who lived by these Biblical themes, was David Sheppard. He captained England, both before and after he was ordained in the Church of England. He chose to minister only in the most downtrodden areas, wrote *'Bias to the Poor'* as part of his campaign for social justice and refused to play against South Africa when their team was controlled by apartheid. All sports need players of principle like him.

(from the Parish Pump)

No one's a Stranger twice

150 Years of Methodism in
the Formby Community



Alastair Gillies